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Notes: Lenten Address: Today Thou Shalt be with Me (Luke 23:42-43), 1943

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TEXT

LUKE 23:33

THEME

Valpo - March 14, 1945

OCCASION

They were -
center + heart

The Mystery of the Cross -

1. Nine o'clock - fair & warm spring morning when the procession reached Calvary - probable that a little rain had fallen - the doves were circling above the hill - birds sang in the olive trees beneath the city walls - a beautiful morning - a day for joy & hope - an unusually good Friday -
2. Sure our Lord saw that. He Who had watched the tilting of the field - the corn ripening for harvest - the moon standing above the valley of the Kedron - He would surely see once more the world as God had made it - beautiful & fair - a world of song & joy & hope - a world so far removed from the pain and tears & blood & hate with which the procession came to the little green hill beyond the gates of the Holy City -
3. So they crucified Him there - surrounded by the strange, continuing goodness of all His creation except its crown - the body & soul of man to which evil, had come - the hole for the Cross is dug - the crosspieces are fitted - the young body is laid upon the beam - one nail is hammered home. The second - the third - arms & legs are bound tight with rope in case the nails would not hold the roused body - the soldiers raise the cross upright - dull that as it falls into the hole dug for it - the blood starts to flow from hands & feet - the aching, tearing pain of crucifixion begins - they crucified Him there
4. [Last year - brought some people here into this church - let them tell their story - John & Peter & Simon & Didymus - tonight revive the process] - we go back to the Cross & stand there - not as contemporaries because it would be too easy for us to join the mob - but as 20th Century men & women [the 60th generation] - the end-products of 1900 years of Christianity - stand at the edge of the crowd for a few moments & look - it ought to be worth while - perhaps eternally -
5. Ever since Calvary - thousands of people - tried to make Christianity reasonable - end too books written as the evidence of Christianity - designed to prove that Christianity

It is
good for
us

Valljo
March 14, 1945

is a very reasonable thing - that you can think it through. appeals to the processes of thought & logic, the canons of knowledge. ^{But} much of that is dangerous nonsense - the Christian religion is not a reasonable religion. Oh, you can move around inside of it by intellectual processes - formulate doctrines - reason from one proposition to another. Work out conclusions - but the great basic truths are always & forever beyond reason - you can't prove them by the ordinary laws of thought - as you reason it's go back further & further. ultimately you always come to the jumping off place - the place where reason ends - the place where you stand either with folded hands or with hands holding a hammer - the place from which you must leap into the arms of God if you want to be a Christian - (the place of mystery & wonder & the strange, heavenly ways of God with men) ^{for others}

6. And here where we are now standing, is the ultimate mystery, the mystery of the Cross - the riddle of God which can be solved only by God & in God - this just doesn't make sense - it isn't reasonable, this Cross, this mob, & God hanging there in the cool of a spring morning - as we stand there - the first question that comes to us: What's behind all this? How did it happen? ^{coming from faith, not from reason.}
7. The answer: the mystery of the evil in man, the lost, dark, ugly, bitter mystery of sin - (St. Anselm) - now our modern minds don't like that very much. We're pretty good people - our friends are pretty good people - people of other races & nations & eras are sometimes pretty bad, but not we - or if we are intelligent, we go beyond that to say that the ^{notion} of man's essential sinfulness is unhistorical & unreasonable - that we must throw off this burden on man - that he must now go forward to a Religion of Humanity - treat in our essential goodness - our power to ^{remake} ~~remake~~ our environment - bootstraps - into a new & better world.
8. Well, you can't stand under the Cross & believe that -

TEXT

THEME

OCCASION

xx that doesn't square with our
theory of progress, our shallow
humanism, our cold
optimism -

not of unreasonable, thoughtless
men, but of bad men and women.

face to face with the mystery of sin - look! - that young man is
33 years old - no crime - healing & love - doing good - & yet
they are killing Him - the last thing the sons of humanity
before He dies is a mob of grinning faces, the last He
hears is a curse, the last He knows is hate & pain - xx

9. And so we turn to our Bible - answer to the mystery -

something begin to believe & to understand. discover that sin is
that job always hate - hate of God & of man - breaching down of all
our world friendship, fellowship - God & man, man & man - we discover
the reason for the Cross - separation, loneliness, wandering,
transgression - {Love once, home once, friend once} - and the
Cross is only the last expression of the dark murder
in our souls, the bitterness of our lives, all the brutality
and tyranny & injustice & greed which has piled up since
Paradise lost.

10. And so we look back to the Cross - a little closer now -
we begin to understand - but not everything - why is that
young man hanging there - we know that He is God - what are
the legions of angels - what keeps Him on that wooden bed
of pain - three nails? three slivers of metal forged by
human hands cannot pin down God - there must be something
else - we have cleared up the mystery of man ^{sin} - we are now
face to face with the mystery of God - He is there because
He wants to be there - He has wanted to hang there from
the foundation of the earth & He still wants to - it is neither
the nails nor the two ropes that hold Him to His dying -
it is just love and nothing else - the perfect love of
the perfect God and the perfect love of the perfect man -
the friendship of God ^{poor} pouring itself down & away through
the Cross - miracle ^{& mystery} of forgiveness - restoration of fellowship -
we lost a friend & He came back to us - we lost a
have & He gave it back to us - we lost a Home and He
brought it to the dust where we were -

Valpo
March 14/11

11. And so the mystery becomes clearer. still a mystery - but we can see that it is & why it is - all strangely simple with the profound simplicity of God-Christianity complex? Can't find your way through? never forget - all of it in two sentences - terribly personal - the cry of the agonized soul. "God be merciful" - & the answering cry of the young man on a Cross on a spring morning "Father, forgive" - That's the whole story - Xianity the story of people who came back again - David crying, Peter, Paul - dash the lion from their eyes - because now they see life & time & sin & death & hope & pain with the eyes of Him Who looked at us from the Cross, saw us as we were & are, and loved us nevertheless.
12. And now - leave Calvary - bring all this down to our own time & life - One more mystery about the Cross - its strange continuing power - ^{emphatic emphasis in our day - esp. among the young - Confession Day 1924} but not hard enough, somewhat apologetically - ^{pagan} "Between us, I suspect you do not exist" - ^{Alfred} ^{religion} - can be broken - stand up & face it - ^{Alfred} at Greenwood - open the pounds - triumphant Christ - Ramin Kennedy's "The Terrible Men"
13. To see this clearly is our task & our duty - for to the seeing eye of faith He is ^{today} no longer a mystery - alone, standing above the fader of the earth - in Whose eyes past & future are the eternal Now - Who know us, even after all those years, who own Him as King and Lord and Who walk with Him through ^{trials} & tribulation and trial & Time Who will come at last, not to a Cross, but to a Throne - because His ^{& His steps} is the Kingdom & the power and the glory forever and ever.

Just what happens

by ear acts -

that knows upon the steps of the power of faith